

**Amendments to the Claims**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

**Listing of Claims:**

1 -3 (canceled)

4 (currently amended). ~~A barrier device as defined in claim 3~~ The combination of utility system cover and barrier device defined in claim 31, wherein the recess includes a mouth through which a tool can be inserted into the recess and a bar extending at least partially across the mouth and oriented to be engaged by a tool which is inserted into the recess.

5 (currently amended). ~~A barrier device as defined in claim~~ The combination of utility system cover and barrier device defined in claim 4, wherein the bar separates the recess into a smaller portion and a larger portion, and wherein the recess is beveled from the portion of the mouth forming part of the larger portion of the recess, to provide convenient access for insertion of a tool into the larger portion of the recess.

6 (currently amended). ~~A barrier device as defined in claim~~ The combination of utility system cover and barrier device defined in claim 31,2, wherein the stem has (a) a closed end which forms a barrier to passage of materials and objects through the stem and (b) an outer wall that is closely spaced with respect to the tool access opening when the stem is pressed into the tool access opening and combines with the tool access opening to provide a barrier to passage of objects and material between the stem and the tool access opening.

7 (currently amended). ~~A barrier device as defined in claim~~ The combination of utility system cover and barrier device defined in claim 6, wherein the hood has a border and the ~~configuration of the hood enables the hood to~~ ~~is~~ at least partially flattened against ~~a~~ the water meter cover near the border of the hood as the ~~cap structure~~ barrier device is being coupled to the ~~water meter utility system~~ cover, so that the border of the hood and the ~~water meter~~ utility system cover

combine to form a barrier to materials and objects near the border of the ~~cap structure barrier device~~.

8 (currently amended). ~~A barrier device as defined in claim~~ The combination of utility system cover and barrier device defined in claim 7, wherein the stem includes at least one coupling portion which has a coupling position in which it is aligned with the underside of a ~~water meter utility system~~ cover and resists separation of the barrier device from the utility system~~a water meter~~ cover, and wherein the stem has a flexibility that enables the coupling portion to flex as the stem is passing through a tool access opening and to be returned to the coupling position when the coupling portion has passed through the tool access opening.

9 (currently amended). ~~A barrier device as defined in claim~~ The combination of utility system cover and barrier device defined in claim 8, wherein the ~~cap structure barrier device~~ has a recess that is formed in the hood and extends at least partially into the stem, the recess configured to allow insertion of a tool for manipulating a coupled ~~cap structure barrier device~~ and ~~water meter utility system~~ cover, and the recess extending at least partially into the stem and providing at least part of the outer wall of the stem with a flexibility that enables the coupling portion to flex as the stem is passing through a tool access opening.

10 (currently amended and withdrawn). ~~A barrier device for a water meter~~ The combination of utility system cover and barrier device defined in claim 31, wherein the barrier device comprises a one piece cap structure ~~configured to be coupled to a~~ the utility system~~water meter~~ cover and including a hood with a border ~~configured to that is~~ at least partially flattened against a ~~water meter~~the utility system cover as the one piece cap structure is being coupled to the ~~water meter utility system~~ cover, so that the border of the hood and the ~~water meter utility system~~ cover combine to form a barrier to materials and objects near the border of the hood.

11 (currently amended and withdrawn). ~~A barrier device as defined in claim~~ The combination of utility system cover and barrier device defined in claim 10, wherein the border of the hood is ~~configured to flattened~~ against the utility system cover over a predetermined range of positions of the hood relative to the utility system cover and still combine with the utility system cover to form a barrier to materials and objects near the border of the hood.

12 (currently amended and withdrawn). A ~~barrier device as defined in claim~~ The combination of utility system cover and barrier device defined in claim 10, wherein the one piece cap structure includes a ~~the~~ stem extending away from the hood, ~~the stem configured to be pressed into an~~ and ~~through~~ the opening in a ~~water meter~~ the utility system cover as the cap structure is being coupled to the ~~water meter~~ utility system cover.

13 (currently amended and withdrawn). A ~~barrier device as defined in claim~~ The combination of utility system cover and barrier device defined in claim 12, wherein the stem has (a) a closed end which forms a barrier to passage of materials and objects through the stem and (b) an outer wall that is closely spaced with respect to the opening in the ~~water meter~~ utility system cover when the stem is ~~pressed into~~ extends through the opening and combines with the opening to provide a barrier to passage of objects and material between the stem and the opening.

14 (currently amended and withdrawn). A ~~barrier device as defined in claim~~ The combination of utility system cover and barrier device defined in claim 13, wherein the stem includes at least one coupling portion that has a coupling position in which it is aligned with a part of a ~~water meter~~ the utility system cover and resists separation of the barrier device from a ~~water meter~~ the utility system cover, and wherein the stem has a flexibility that enables the coupling portion to flex as the stem is ~~pressed inserted~~ into an ~~the~~ opening in a ~~water meter~~ the utility system cover and to be returned to the coupling position when the coupling portion has passed through the opening in the ~~water meter~~ utility system cover.

15 (currently amended and withdrawn). A ~~barrier device as defined in claim~~ The combination of utility system cover and barrier device defined in claim 12, wherein the stem includes at least one coupling portion that has a coupling position in which it is aligned with a part of a ~~water meter~~ utility system cover and resists separation of the barrier device from a ~~water meter~~ the utility system cover, and wherein the stem has a flexibility that enables the coupling portion to flex as the stem is ~~pressed inserted~~ into an ~~the~~ opening in a ~~water meter~~ the utility system cover and to be returned to the coupling position when the coupling portion has passed through the opening in the ~~water meter~~ utility system cover.

16 (currently amended and withdrawn). ~~A barrier device as defined in claim~~ The combination of utility system cover and barrier device defined in claim 31, wherein the border of the hood is ~~configured to flattened~~ against the utility system cover over a range of positions of the hood relative to the ~~water meter~~ utility system cover and still combine with the utility system cover to form a barrier to materials and objects near the border of the hood, and wherein the flexibility of the stem and the location of the coupling portion along the stem are designed to provide a range of positions of the coupling portion relative to the utility system cover over which the coupling portion will be in a position to resist separation of the barrier device from the utility system cover, whereby the barrier device can be coupled with a utility system cover whose thickness can vary over a predetermined range and the hood of the barrier device will combine with the utility system cover to form a barrier to materials and objects near the border of the hood over that predetermined thickness range.

17 (currently amended). ~~A barrier device for a fluid system cover~~ The combination of utility system cover and barrier device defined in claim 31, wherein the barrier device ~~configured to be coupled to the fluid system cover and comprising~~ a hood with a border ~~configured to that is~~ at least partially flattened against a ~~fluid~~ utility system cover as the barrier device is being coupled to the fluid utility system cover, so that the border of the hood and the fluid utility system cover combine to form a barrier to materials and objects near the border of the hood.

18 (currently amended). ~~A barrier device as defined in claim~~ The combination of utility system cover and barrier device defined in claim 17, wherein the border of the hood is ~~configured to flattened~~ against the fluid utility system cover over a predetermined range of positions of the hood relative to the utility system cover and still combine with the utility system cover to form a barrier to materials and objects near the border of the hood.

19 (canceled).

20 (currently amended). ~~A barrier device as defined in claim~~ The combination of utility system cover and barrier device defined in claim 17 ~~19~~, wherein the stem has (a) a closed end which forms a barrier to passage of materials and objects through the stem and (b) an outer wall that is closely spaced with respect to the opening in the fluid utility system cover when the stem is

pressed into the opening and combines with the opening to provide a barrier to passage of objects and material between the stem and the opening.

21 (currently amended). ~~A barrier device as defined in claim~~ The combination of utility system cover and barrier device defined in claim 20, wherein the stem includes at least one coupling portion which has a coupling position in which it is aligned with a part of ~~a fluid~~ the utility system cover and resists separation of the device from ~~a fluid~~ the utility system cover, and wherein the stem has a flexibility that enables the coupling portion to flex as the stem is pressed into an opening in a fluid system cover and to be returned to the coupling position when the coupling portion has passed through the opening in the fluid system cover.

22 (currently amended). ~~A barrier device as defined in claim~~ The combination of utility system cover and barrier device defined in claim 17 ~~19~~, wherein the stem includes at least one coupling portion that has a coupling position in which it is aligned with a part of ~~a fluid~~ the utility system cover and resists separation of the barrier device from ~~a fluid~~ the utility system cover, and wherein the stem has a flexibility that enables the coupling portion to flex as the stem is pressed into an opening in ~~a fluid~~ the utility system cover and to be returned to the coupling position when the coupling portion has passed through the opening in the ~~fluid~~ utility system cover.

23 (currently amended). ~~A barrier device as defined in claim~~ The combination of utility system cover and barrier device defined in claim 22, wherein the border of the hood is ~~configured to~~ flattened against the utility system cover over a range of positions of the hood relative to the ~~fluid~~ utility system cover and still combine with the utility system cover to form a barrier to materials and objects near the border of the hood, and wherein the flexibility of the stem and the location of the coupling portion along the stem are designed to provide a range of positions of the coupling portion relative to the utility system cover over which the coupling portion will be in a position to resist separation of the barrier device from the utility system cover, whereby the barrier device can be coupled with a utility system cover whose thickness can vary over a predetermined range and the hood of the barrier device will combine with the utility system cover to form a barrier to materials and objects near the border of the hood over that predetermined thickness range.

24 (currently amended) ~~A barrier device as defined in claim~~ The combination of utility system cover and barrier device defined in claim 31,2, wherein extender structure is configured to be integrally coupled to the stem, to provide an extended ~~cap structure~~ barrier device that ~~can be~~ is coupled to ~~at~~ the utility system cover.

25 (currently amended). ~~A barrier device as defined in claim~~ The combination of utility system cover and barrier device defined in claim 24, wherein the extender structure comprises an extender and a locking member that ~~can be~~ is coupled to the extender to couple the extended ~~cap structure~~ barrier device to a utility system cover; the stem having a recess with a closed end and the extender comprising a strap ~~that is configured to~~ (a) pierces the closed end of the recess (b) extends through the pierced end of the recess and (c) closes off the pierced end of the recess, thereby to extend the stem of the ~~barrier device~~ cap structure, and the locking member configured to engage the strap in a manner such that the locking member can move along the stem in a first direction for coupling the extended ~~barrier device~~ cap structure with ~~at~~ the utility system cover.

26 (currently amended). ~~A barrier device as defined in claim~~ The combination of utility system cover and barrier device defined in claim 245, wherein the extender structure comprises an extender and a locking member that ~~is~~ can be coupled to the extender to couple the extended ~~barrier device~~ cap structure to a utility system cover; the stem ~~has~~ having a distal end with an opening and the extender comprising a strap configured to extend through the opening in the distal end of the recess and to close off the opening in the distal end of the recess, thereby to extend the stem of the ~~barrier device~~ cap structure, and the locking member configured to engage the strap in a manner such that the locking member can move along the stem in a first direction for coupling the extended ~~barrier device~~ cap structure with ~~at~~ the utility system cover.

27 (currently amended). ~~A barrier device as defined in claim~~ The combination of utility system cover and barrier device defined in claim 26, wherein the locking member comprises a relatively flat portion with a raised portion having a passageway configured to receive the strap and to move along the strap in the first direction, for coupling the extended cap structure with a cover.

28 (currently amended). ~~A barrier device as defined in claim~~ The combination of utility system cover and barrier device defined in claim 27, wherein the raised portion and strap have respective

ratchet structure configured to enable the locking member to move in the first direction along the strap and resisting movement of the locking member in the opposite direction along the strap.

29 (currently amended). ~~A barrier device as defined in claim 28, A barrier device for a utility system cover having a tool access opening, comprising a cap structure configured to (a) be coupled to a utility system cover, (b) cover a tool access opening in the utility system cover in a manner that provides a barrier to materials and objects passing through the tool access opening in the utility system cover, and (c) provide structure for engagement by a tool, to enable a coupled barrier device and cover to be manipulated by the tool;~~

wherein the cap structure comprises a hood and a stem extending away from the hood, the stem configured to be inserted into a tool access opening in a utility system cover and to couple the barrier device to the utility system cover, and the hood being configured to cover the tool access opening in the utility system cover when the cap structure is coupled to the utility system cover;

wherein extender structure is configured to be integrally coupled to the stem, to provide an extended cap structure that can be coupled to a cover, the extender structure comprising an extender and a locking member that can be coupled to the extender to couple the extended cap structure to a cover; the stem having a recess with a closed end and the extender comprising a strap configured to (a) pierce the closed end of the recess (b) extend through the pierced end of the recess and (c) close off the pierced end of the recess, thereby to extend the stem of the cap structure, and the locking member configured to engage the strap in a manner such that the locking member can move along the stem in a first direction for coupling the extended cap structure with a cover, wherein the stem has a distal end with an opening and the extender comprising a strap configured to extend through the opening in the distal end of the recess and to close off the opening in the distal end of the recess, thereby to extend the stem of the cap structure, wherein the locking member comprises a relatively flat portion with a raised portion having a passageway configured to receive the strap and to move along the strap in the first direction, for coupling the extended cap structure with a cover, wherein the raised portion and strap have respective ratchet structure configured to enable the locking member to move in the

first direction along the strap and resisting movement of the locking member in the opposite direction along the strap, and

wherein the raised portion extends in one direction from the relatively flat portion, and wherein the relatively flat portion has a peripheral skirt that extends in the opposite direction from the relatively flat portion, the locking member configured such that the peripheral skirt will engage the underside of a fluid system cover when the locking member moves in the first direction along the strap.

30 (currently amended). A barrier device as defined in claim 29, wherein the raised portion, its respective ratchet structure, and the peripheral skirt are formed in one piece with the relatively flat portion.

31 (new) In combination, a utility system cover, and a barrier device coupled to the utility system cover, the utility system cover having a tool access opening that (i) extends through the cover from a top side of the cover to an underside of the cover, and (ii) is configured to enable the cover to be engaged and manipulated by a tool that is designed to engage and manipulate the cover; the barrier device comprising a hood and a stem extending away from the hood; the stem extending into and through the tool access opening in the fluid system cover and engaging the underside of the cover to couple the barrier device to the cover; the hood and at least part of the stem configured to cover the tool access opening in the fluid system cover, in a manner that provides a barrier to materials and objects passing through the tool access opening in the cover; and the barrier device having a recess configured to receive and engage a portion of a tool in a manner that enables the tool to engage and manipulate the coupled barrier device and cover.

32 (new). The combination of utility system cover and barrier device defined in claim 31, wherein the stem includes extender structure to enable the stem to extend through a tool access opening of a predetermined thickness range, and wherein the stem includes coupling structure that engages the extender structure and the underside of the cover to couple the barrier device to the cover.